

"The brigade was outfitted with the required, basic equipment," said Maj. Gen. William E. Ingram, Jr., adjutant general of the North Carolina National Guard. "This additional equipment will help our troops operate more efficiently and help to get them safely home."

The Department of Crime Control & Public Safety (CCPS), which houses the National Guard, has already collected about 3,700 pieces of used body armor from law enforcement agencies. It expects to get another several hundred more pieces.

"Personal armored vests have already been provided to our soldiers, and our Law Enforcement Support Services division put the word out to law enforcement agencies that we needed their used armored vests, and they have responded with patriotic fervor," said Sec. Bryan Beatty. "These donated vests will help reinforce the 'soft-skin' vehicles, adding more physical protection to the vehicles as well as peace of mind to the soldiers."

The National Guard headquarters in Raleigh is expediting the purchase of the additional equipment and hopes to ship it to Iraq as soon as possible. The cost of the additional supplies is estimated to be less than \$1 million.

"I want to be able to say to our military families that we have done all we can to help our soldiers conduct their mission and return home safely," said Easley. "After talking with Brig. Gen. Hickman and the National Guard, I believe this shipment of additional resources will help accomplish this goal."

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